

THE
TEMPLE
DRUMS



The Temple Drums

by

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of



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INTRODUCTION

This scenario is set in New York City and northern Maine in the fall of 1936 during the latter days of the Great Depression. It is presented as a series of clues, locations, threats and NPC's. This module is meant to be completed in a single night of play, so the events that unfold are fairly linear. That does not mean that the investigators may not stumble upon clues or trigger events out of order but in the end, they will have either uncovered the mystery that has occurred or else died trying. 'The Temple Drums' offers the investigators who have died an interesting opportunity. For the remainder of the scenario they will be treated as spirits. Then, with the cooperation a psychic or occultist they will be able to communicate their discoveries or thoughts during a séance. This will allow for them to continue with the game and add to the overall mood.

Advice to the Keeper: It is advisable that you read through the whole scenario before attempting it. By doing so, the mood and motives will make sense to you and will help guide you should the players look into something that this module did not foresee.

While it is not important to play every single piece of this scenario as written, it is recommended that the NPC's are played as they are designed. The dark goings on at the Droyden House will make more sense to the investigation team and the finale will become clear, making the journey more worthwhile. Remember, in the end you are the Keeper and if you feel like adding or subtracting elements, it is entirely your right to do so. Now, let us begin 'The Temple Drums.'

Contents of this Scenario

1. **Background:** The history behind the discovery of several odd and disturbing items and their current location.
2. **Getting the Investigators involved:** Setting up the job and its parameters for success. After your players decide on a pre-generated character from Call of Cthulhu or roll their own determine which opening best fits their chosen backgrounds.
3. **Information on the three locations:** Specific information on the three key points of interest in the story that the players will have to navigate.
4. **Walk through:** A step by step, series of events and encounters, that will push the players

to the very brink of survival. This game is meant to be played in a single 4-5-hour session so the group will need to keep pace and stay focused.

5. **Appendices:** NPC stats, map and several other handouts to use during the investigation into 'The Temple Drums.'

Background

The events that are about to entangle the team have their origins somewhere deep in the Yucatan Peninsula during the spring of 1919. It was here that the now famous expedition of Earl Hallstead Morris began digging into the Aztec empire that stretched across Mexico some four hundred years prior.

Arriving with a team of about forty men and women, Morris decided to waste no time and began pushing immediately into the interior of the jungle. His local guides spoke a broken form of Spanish and some other dialect that was difficult for Morris and his colleagues to understand. In notes from one of the other archeologists on site, "the language of our locals is definitely some indigenous mixture of Central American Indian and Spanish. We are able to get our thoughts and desires across but occasionally we lose the more finite details of their conversation and end up wondering how a trek they claim should take only a few hours ends up consuming an entire day and sometimes even a night."

After three weeks of fighting through the jungle the expedition arrived at a large cave near a spring of fresh water and while exploring the crevice uncovered two artifacts that Morris immediately concluded were not of Aztec origin. While this frustrated the archeologist several members of his team including Albert Bryin were not so convinced. Bryin had joined the expedition late and somewhat to the chagrin of Dr. Morris. While they were contemporaries, it is fairly apparent from the field notes that Morris felt that Bryin was somewhat quick to speculation and less than thorough with his verification of facts and dates. He writes, "The man (Bryin) continues to speak even though he is vastly out of his element. If it weren't for several key backers removing themselves from our expedition at the last minute and taking with them a substantial dispensation of funds, I would have never allowed him to join us. He does little work during the day and by night makes outlandish claims to understanding the central American peoples and yet when I press him about his credentials, he quickly changes the subject and finds a new topic to conjure up so as to impress. I am not entirely saying that he is without some skills in archeology, just that he is not suited for the subtleties of uncovering and understanding new and rare items. He is a man who would be well

suited to stand on the shoulders of giants... not walk among them.”

The day after discovering the relics, the team has a breakthrough. Morris writes in some detail that they have uncovered two more relics that also seem “out of place”. He makes several sketches and in his expeditionary journal posts this entry on the 26th of April 1919: “...inside a cave. That was the first bit of evidence that made me skeptical as to the authenticity of these items. From what I have come to understand of the Aztecs’ almost all of their funerary and sacrificial ceremonies would have been conducted around or on temple grounds. Because they were not the only peoples to occupy this region at the time it would have been dangerous for the Aztecs to venture far into the jungle to perform a small rite or service. I have also examined the uncovered items and I am for lack of a better words, at a loss. They are of a strange design and construct. Their shape and symbology are like nothing I have ever encountered. Dating the find is also proving difficult. The small cave/tomb definitely seems quite ancient; however, these pieces have opal and jade worked into some of their surfaces. Since these gemstones are not indigenous to this continent it leads me to want to date these so-called ‘treasures’ as only a few hundred years old and potentially brought here by the Conquistadors. Bryin of course, to no one’s shock, is refuting the idea. He has boldly claimed that the pendant, statue, ring and drum are all far older and pre-date even the great Pre-classic Mayan civilization” (circa 2000 B.C. – 159 A.D.).

It appears as if the entire company is held up for several days due to a heavy rainfall and during that time things continue to unravel between Morris and Bryin. “I have begged him to let go of these ridiculous theories that some ancient and highly advanced culture had somehow made contact with the natives of Central America and traded with them. He even has two other scientists Dr. Jack Mesker and Dr. Patricia Reese now breathing life into this absurd theory. My tent has been overrun for the last two days listening to first one then the other plead for me to halt my course and spend precious time here excavating deeper into the cave. I can only believe that these requests stem from the fact that Bryin discovered it and now the hope for fame and fortune have seeped into his pores. This man is not a true archeologist but a circus hawker. He wants to cash in on his findings rather than prove and record the actual history of this area.”

Finally, on the fifth night of delay at the cave Morris had enough, “I told him to keep his blasted money. I will venture ahead on my own with the remaining two thirds of the team. He and about ten have opted to remain behind and dig deeper into that accursed grotto. He is keeping the uncovered items and I have renounced all rights to any other things that they may or may not unearth. Bryin is consumed with

these pieces and no matter how much I explain to him that their existence does not validate his theory he now shouts and postures and challenges me to explain them. Since I cannot explain their origins or purpose, he stands there victorious and all puffed out in self-righteousness. Now that the rain has ceased, I have decided to leave in the morning. Let them continue to quake and rant about what I truly believe is little more than an archeological rabbit hole. In the end, it will offer little insight into the Aztecs or their massive empire.”

Morris kept his word and left Bryin, Mesker and Reese at the site with a single guide and only a small handful of laborers.

What happens over the next few months equates to one tragedy after another; several diggers go missing and Mesker perishes from disease. After nearly five months Bryin, Patricia Reese and a single guide are the only people to emerge from the dense jungle into a remote village. From here they are eventually able to get word back to Mexico City and a telegraph to Bryin’s family in New England. However, while waiting for rescue and a chance to see home again, Patricia is discovered brutally murdered. Bryin wrote, “She was discovered the victim of some terrible crime. Due to the remoteness of our village there was no local constabulary to identify the perpetrators and since they had no means of preserving her body, we interned her there and did our best to send her to god’s grace with Christian words and prayers.” Years later when pressed about the crime committed against his colleague, he would turn pale and merely say, “no woman or man should be forced to suffer so. I pray she finds a special place of peace beside the maker.”

In the fall of 1921, Bryin returned home with the four items he originally found, and a scroll with misshapen occult symbols drawn onto it.

Albert Bryin retired from active archeology the next year and from the social scene in New York not long after that. He took all of his belongings to the Droyden House a few hours north of Houlton Maine in 1922 and has not been seen since. His only contact with the world outside the estates vast grounds come through his attorneys’ offices in Boston.

That was until three weeks ago when Albert Bryin’s body was discovered by his nephew Jonathan on the property. The local paper reported that Bryin had passed in his sleep of natural causes. It also said that he is survived by his nephew, his nephew’s wife Melinda and their fourteen-year-old daughter Tabitha who attends a private boarding school in Massachusetts. No other relatives are remaining.

Getting the Investigators Involved

There are two distinct ways of getting the investigators involved in the story. The keeper should read through the two openings and determine which one best fits the backgrounds of the characters that have been chosen. For the sake of this section we will call those two openings **Professional** and **Criminal**. Either way, the story begins in New York City in the fall of 1936.

The Professional Opening

For this opening the players have been contacted either as part of a detective agency or individually to meet with the Head Curator of The Museum of Natural History. Read the following text to the players and have them prepare to attend the meeting.

The rain has been coming down in freezing sheets of freezing rain for the last four days. The city, which already mimics the mood of its inhabitants' reeks of misery and disgust. The gray November sky seems like it is refusing to allow the sun to break through keeping the miasma hanging across the sky like a heavy blanket pulled tightly over the head of a frightened child.

Times are hard and for the average New Yorker that means hustling day and night just to make ends meet. That's not to say that people are so busy they aren't up to no good. With alcohol freely flowing again, men and women are back to focusing their sadness and pain into the original pastime. It doesn't seem to matter what your net worth is in this shit storm of a city. Rich, poor, young or old everyone appears to be humpin' someone else's significant other. Which means that lately taking jobs has become one mundane cheater or missing person case after another. Either way, you end up taking pictures of people rolling around in some motel bed. That's why, when you get a chance to break the monotony with an interesting case--you jump.

That is exactly the type of thing that happened yesterday. When the agency's secretary took the call from Bernard Vance, head curator of the Museum of Natural History, regarding a recovery job, you immediately said 'yes' and called in a special team of professionals to help you secure the artifacts and bring them safely back to New York.

The Criminal Opening

For this opening the players are working for the Genovese crime family in various jobs within the organization. Some may be enforcers, others running numbers or handling one of the legitimate businesses that the family has their hands in. Part of the family's strength was also being involved in legal business where they could hide their other nefarious operations.

You've been called to the penthouse of Joseph Genovese on the upper east side of Manhattan. Joseph is the great nephew of Vito Genovese and therefore is considered royalty among the crime bosses of the city. However, being that he is only twenty-three years old, handsome and a very well-educated young gentleman, the family has been under strict orders to keep Joseph's involvement to the bare minimum. That does not mean that it will stay that way forever. This summons to attend the "Lil Prince" in the early morning hours without a full enforcer entourage makes you begin to wonder how on the "up and up" this meeting could possibly be.

As you sit in the back of the jet-black sedan that was sent to pick you up at your apartment you can't help but feel a sense of dread. Maybe it's the weather, the ceaseless rain that has been pouring down mercilessly for three straight day or maybe it's a sixth sense that things are about to take a turn down a road from which there will be no turning back.

You arrive at his residence. An impeccably dressed doorman steps from the safety of the awning into the biting November rain to open the car door for you. He tips his cap as you exit the growling automobile and he escorts you to the lobby doors. He then smiles and pulls the door open, "just go straight through to the elevators and Pablo will take you up to see Mr. Genevese."

You are whisked into the elevator and a man in his early forties, well dressed and with a face that has blocked more than its fair share of kicks and punches takes his measure of you. Turning away from his scrutiny you feel that you did less than most to impress him. The elevator continues to lurch its way skyward and with a sudden jolt it comes to a stop at the fifty-third floor. The gorilla next to you peels back the iron grille so you can disembark. Before you is the most lavishly decorated room you have ever seen. Stepping forward, you see a group of other hacks that have been asked to attend, some you recognize, some you don't. You make your way to the bar and pour yourself a stiff shot, knowing that with the lowlives assembled in this room, your night is going to be anything but dull.

Professional: Meeting with Mr. Bernard Vance

The Museum is closed by the time the investigators arrive for their meeting with Vance. They make their way to a loading dock entrance around the back of the Museum and knock on a heavy iron door illuminated by red emergency light.

You arrive as group your way around the back of the large brick building to the loading area, as you were instructed. You see several large bays for tractor trailers to back into for unloading or loading the various exhibits that the museum displays and loans out to other institutions.

The sound of your shoes is all you can hear beyond the assault of the rain drops on the tarmac. At the end of the loading docks you see a small steel staircase that leads from ground level to a heavy iron fire door bathed in a pale red glow from the emergency light above. You knock on the door and press a button to alert the security guard on shift that there is a late-night delivery for the museum.

Minutes pass and you are becoming somewhat concerned. You check your watch to confirm the time. You meet the eyes of your fellow investigators and not seeing any accusation there that might make you feel like you had gotten any of the facts wrong, you beat on the door one more time it suddenly swings open and standing there is one of the security guards.

“Hurry up will ya, Mr. Vance is already looking for ya. Never seen him so worked up and edgy. You can leave your wet overcoats and umbrellas here if you like. When you leave you’ll be exiting through this same door.”

The Security guard is an ex-cop, Paul Riggs, who was wounded several years ago in the line of duty and decided to take his pension early and get a job where he would most likely not get shot at again.

The players are led through the loading dock and warehouse and exit into the museum at the back of the main level. The whole building has an incredibly different feel at night as many of the exhibits sit in diffused light or in the glow of emergency lighting that cast long and odd shadows across the floor. You follow the security guard to the elevators, and he presses the button signaling the lift that it will be ascending into the upper levels of the building. Once the lift arrives read the next set of text to the players.

Riggs steps into the elevator for a brief moment to use his key and activate the top most button on the panel.

“Come on and step in. Hurry up, come on, come on, the alarm will ring if I hold the door

open for too long and that would be more attention than any of us want right now.”

Once all the investigators are on board, he steps off the lift and watches you as the doors slide closed.

The lift takes only a few moments before it opens at the end of a long and dimly lit hallway. As you step out you are greeted with an eerie silence that seems to seep from the marble floor and walls like water. A directory on the wall to your right identifies that the office you seek is in front of you at the very end this passage. The group proceeds past several offices and rooms that have been assigned to various departments.

You hear a door open at the end of the hall, “Why are you all standing there? Please, please come in. I am a very busy man and as I am sure you know, it is getting late.”

The players enter into the office of Bernard Vance and immediately are impressed with the opulence that surrounds them. A sitting area is off to the left with a couch and several wingback armchairs. Books line almost every inch of the walls on three sides of the room. The far wall is made entirely of large glass panels that overlook the massive stone stairs at the entrance to the museum. A stately mahogany desk sits before them, its surface dominated by the trappings of a busy manager: phone, stapler, inkwell and pen set, gold plated name plate, lamp and a myriad of file organizers. With all these things present the desk is well organized and immaculately clean.

Vance, a well-dressed man in his late fifties wearing a black tailored suit and wing tip shoes, moves through the room and invites the group to come towards his desk. Since there are only two leather chairs present some of the players will have to stand. Bernard relaxes into his oxblood button leather chair and reaching forward, adjusts his name plate, then leans back intertwining his fingers in his lap before speaking.

“Thank you all for coming. I appreciate that you are all busy and most likely have a number of open cases, but I can assure you this matter that brings us together is not only urgent but will be most profitable.” He pauses for a moment and studies you, taking in your reaction to the word, profitable.

“Several years ago, we received a packet with a promissory donation letter for several artifacts that were unearthed during the famous Aztec dig of Dr. Halsted Morris in the spring of 1919. As some of you may or may not remember there was some friction between Morris and his partner Dr. Albert Bryin who claimed these particular items as his own. The relics proved to be somewhat of a puzzle in truth and authenticating them to an exact time and dynastic period was, well, unsuccessful. However, Bryin insisted that these items were

not only valuable but that the very essence of their mystery made them...unique. But I digress..."

'Fast forward, if you will, to two days ago. I received a visit from an attorney from the Boston law firm Bervitz and Dean with a copy of Albert Bryin's will. Inside it he confirmed his wish to leave these pieces to us here at the Museum. But like so many things in life there was a small catch. Bryin's only surviving relatives; Jonathan, his nephew, and his wife Melinda claimed that Bryin was found to be mentally unfit years ago and that his will should be void. This attorney who came by suggested to me that we should move with all haste to secure the pieces before the family has time to put a legal team together. He informed me 'off the record' that they might be looking for some monetary settlement since the estate they were left includes only the family home and some delinquent debt."

Vance takes a sip of his cognac and savors the flavor before completing his tale, "So, where do you lot come in? I want you to represent the museum in this matter. I want you to examine the pieces and confirm that they match with the inventory list Bryin originally sent us. If the pieces are all there, then you are to offer the family a check for the items. I have authorized you to offer them up to twenty-five thousand dollars. Of course, if they will take less, we would prefer it. But please understand, I, like Bryin, believe these artifacts will in time reveal their secrets to us. The fact that even Morris agreed they were peculiar and beyond his comprehension only whets my appetite more. Even though they are mundane in shape and structure I am convinced they serve a higher purpose. A purpose that perhaps will one day open our eyes to the very face of some mighty and ancient being... Are they any other questions?"

**** Major Plot Note to the Keeper...**

The attorney Vance has just mentioned was actually Jonathan Bryin. He is posing as an attorney because his Uncle is alive and holding his daughter hostage. Bryin believes that if he can sacrifice enough people, he will be able to open a portal to some alternate dimension and gain eternal life. Bryin has tried before but is now convinced he needs more bloodshed in a single night's ritual. The family are afraid and are going along with Bryin's nefarious scheme to save Tabitha.

This should not be revealed to the players until the end of the story.

It is at this point that the players can be told as much or as little as you feel they are entitled to based on the questions they ask. If they are going

to begin looking into the actual dig and its notes, then have them make a library check.

Skill check	Players uncover info regarding the dig and some information on the falling out between the two men and the location of Bryin's home in Maine.
Mod:	
Hard	As above. Players also find images of the items (see appendices)
Extreme	As above. And the players find an article written in Boston shortly after Bryin arrived home in which the journalist alludes that Bryin was involved in the death of Patricia Reese.

At this point the players will need to make their way towards Houlton which is the closest stop by train that they can arrange. If they are using the train, then the trip will take them first to Boston and then onwards towards Houlton. The entire trip with stops will take about nine hours. If they prefer to use a bus, then the trip will take almost thirteen hours to complete without stopping except refuel.

Either way, the journey itself will have an encounter and those will be later in this section marked as: **Getting to Houlton By Train or By Bus.**

Criminal: *Breakfast with the Lil' Prince*

Across from the bar, three women are lounging on oversized cushions of the soft suede couch that dominates much of the area. On the table in front of the couch are empty bottles of champagne and more glasses than just three females would have ever needed. The girls look over their shoulders at the investigators but upon seeing them are not overly impressed and go back to purring, giggling and whispering to one another. The front of the room is dominated by the New York skyline which is all electric and neon lights due to the early hour. Off to the right is the dining room and in it a well-set table for eight guests is prepared and waiting. Decanters of juices and Bloody Mary's adorn the table along with fresh cut fruit

and cream. Along the sideboard are several chaffing dishes that are filled with various breakfast meats and staple options. Joseph comes into the dining room dressed in a fine pair of trousers and a button-down shirt with suspenders.

“Morning, please won’t you join me for breakfast?” The dapper young man waves his arm out inviting you to take a seat at the table.

“So, I’m sure you are all wondering why I have asked you here in the middle of the night? Well, it has to do with my schooling at university. A few years back, I had taken a class about archeology which focused on the Americas, central America to be more precise. In this class we learned about a dig that started out looking to answer questions regarding the Aztec empire but stumbled upon something else. In that dig this guy by the name of Albert Bryin uncovered some items that were so odd and so old that even his mentor and the leader of the dig, Dr. Morris could not identify them. So, one thing leads to another and they have a falling out. Morris goes deeper into the jungle while Bryin, the guy with the artifacts stays put. The dig goes belly up and he loses a bunch of guys. So, he decides to quit and try to make his way home. Some natives get angry at this team and a few others die including one woman, whose name escapes me but from what I do remember it was a bad situation. So, a year passes before they can drag him back home to Maine, where the rumors have him turning into a complete recluse and a bit of a mad hatter.

“Now, this all seems well and good and really nothing to do with me or you for that matter. However, this crazy guy’s nephew Jonathan he loves the ponies. And, like so many other fellas out there that love them also beat on them, and most bet like shit. So, Jonathan is into my family for about twenty large and has offered to make good on the dept in total with these artifacts that his Uncle brought back from Mexico. One small issue, the items were left in the old man’s will to the Museum of Natural History. I’ve met the head curator several times at fund raisers and he isn’t going to want to give them up so easily.”

Joseph fixes a plate of eggs, bacon and toast and sits down at the head of the table while continuing, “I need you folks to head to the estate, its north of Houlton and make sure to verify that the items he’s releasing to us are the real McCoy. . However, the relics this guys got are believed to be worth quite a bit more than he owes. So, I am giving you ten grand to offer to them. That cash, plus what he owes and we’re all square. Cabiche?” he says smiling.

“Then, get them the hell out of there before the legal eagles from the Museum show up with crates to ship them back. I want these items for an auction coming up. And, Jonathan, if he’s smart wants to keep his legs. Now, if there are

no more questions, make a plate and let’s mangia!”

The players are given the actual address to the Droyden House and ten thousand dollars to bring the relics back to Joseph as soon as possible. The players are sure to have some questions, but Joseph’s knowledge is limited. They will need to make their way to a library or use some other means of intel gathering to get up to speed with the legends surrounding the relics they seek.

Skill check	Players uncover info regarding the dig and some information on the falling out between the two men and the location of Bryin’s home in Maine.
Mod:	
Hard	As above. Players also find images of the items (see appendices marked Relics).
Extreme	As above. And the players find an article written in Boston shortly after Bryin arrived home in which a journalist alludes that Bryin was to blame for the death of Patricia Reese

Once the players are ready and have all the info and supplies, they must decide on transport. Players will need to make their way towards Houlton which is the closest stop by train that they can arrange. If they are using the train, then the trip will take them first to Boston and then onwards towards **Houlton**. The entire trip with stops will take about nine hours. If they prefer to use the bus, then the trip will take almost thirteen hours to complete.

Either way, the journey itself will have an encounter and those will be later in this section marked as **By Train or by Bus**.

The Locations...

Getting to Houlton By Train

The following event will take place during the nine-hour (overnight) trip.

You and your team board the train at Grand Central Station that is set to depart for Boston within the hour. Since the trip is overnight you have all been reserved seats in the pullman coach which has larger reclining chairs and a basic food and beverage service if needed.

As your luggage is stowed away for you in the cargo car you sit yourself down in a comfortable yet practical chair and collect your thoughts about the upcoming case. After a few minutes of mentally reviewing your notes, you glance at your watch and see that time has snaked past you faster than you had realized. It is now ten-thirty at night and you are thankful that there is only fifteen more minutes until the train is scheduled to be underway. Passengers begin taking their seats and conversing with their companions.

Your team sits near one another and some begin making small talk while others immediately begin dozing off as the train lurches itself into motion. The night remains active for another hour or so and then as the clock closes towards midnight, people begin to settle down and allow slumber to envelop them.

At this point tell the players that they can either visit the bar in another adjoining car or get ready for bed (people in this cabin tend to travel in their day clothes. So, no need for nightshirts or gowns but they may want to brush their teeth and so on.) They can also speak to other NPC's nearby but until the encounter at 2 am no real information will become apparent. Remember this train first stops in Boston for a forty-minute layover before moving on. It is recommended that players stay on the train during the layover. If someone MUST leave the train for some odd reason the station will be nearly devoid of people since it will be about three a.m. The only place open is a rest room and that will be completely empty.

2 a.m. The lady in scarlet...

Have the players make a sanity check; the following encounter should occur to the person or persons who fail. If everyone passes the sanity check use the player that came nearest to failing the roll. The others who sleep through the event will have no memory or understanding of what the awakened player/s saw or recount.

You awaken in the pullman car where you must have dozed off. You are uncertain if it's been a

few minutes or several hours since you fell asleep. The lights that illuminate the train car have been turned down to a soft glow barely keeping the walkways between the seats safely lit.

Around you there seem to be only a handful of people in this car other than your team and all of them are fast asleep. You yawn deeply and rub some of the sleep from your eyes. The train passes through a tunnel and the noise stirs you a bit more from your semi-conscious state. You shake your head to dismiss the cobwebs and hear the sound of a door opening at the far end of the coach. There is a rush of wind as someone moves from the exposed platform between the train cars into the pullman coach, the slamming door catches your attention.

You stretch and look down the aisle to see a woman with blonde hair, perhaps in her late twenties, look around and lock eyes with you. The expression on her face is mischievous and hints at a recent sin she hopes you can't see in her eyes. Her lipstick is smeared, and your sharp eye detects that the belt she is wearing is upside down, as if it was put on in a rush. Her blouse is a simple button up shirt and her trousers are comfortable linen pants dyed a deep scarlet color.

The players that failed the roll or were nearest to failing are witnessing the reenactment of the night that Dr. Patricia Reese was taken from her hut and brutally murdered. The players are in the midst of a nightmare and it is simply their own imaginations running away with them. Read the following text and then let the players react accordingly. Under no circumstance should the players witnessing the event be able to interact with the players who successfully made their sanity check. They are locked into a private nightmare and need to see it through to the end or deduce their way out of it.

The woman walks towards you and begins to undo several buttons along the front of her blouse. The fabric clings loosely to her as she proceeds to lie down on the carpet that adorns the small aisle. She drifts off to sleep and as she does so her body begins to float up off the floor very slowly. Completely fascinated by her levitation you can't help but watch the events unfold in front of you.

Moments later, the body of this young woman seems to get grabbed by the front of her blouse and dragged into an upright position. She grins and her expression is one of arousal rather than fear. She says something but no sound emanates from her mouth. Then the invisible force that was holding her rips the shirt right off her back. A moment of shock passes over her but then turns from panic to lust as she squirms, the nervous sexual tension seems to further excite her. Then things take a terrible turn...

Her head begins to snap from side to side as phantasmal blows crash into her face from fore and backhand blows. Her mouth opens but no screams come out. She is simply shaken like a ragdoll as the invisible assailant continues to pummel her.

Players still cannot move but may begin to challenge the scene before them. It is important that if they try to awaken themselves or disbelieve the illusion at this point it will not work. Let them debate it a few moments and then continue...

The young woman slams to the ground, her expression a knot of pain like that of someone who has had the wind knocked completely from their lungs. She fails her arms trying slap away whomever or whatever is attacking her. Her body tenses and she seems to be wrestling against something heavy on top of her. Her arms reach forward as if clutching against someone who is trying to stab her with a knife. As you watch it becomes apparent that her strength is waning, and she only has a few moments left to live.

The players can break out of the dream state at this point. If they chose to disbelieve what they are seeing they can awaken and take the following damage:

Players that failed the roll outright suffer a d6 sanity damage. If a player made the roll but was closest to failing they suffer a d3 sanity damage from the shock of leaving the event before it was over.

To any players that remain they will experience the following:

The young woman continues to scream in silence and arches back desperately trying to throw off whatever it is that assaults her. She turns to you and you can clearly see the fear that grips her. Tears run freely down her pink cheeks and her lips seem like they are trying to tell you something, something important, something you have to hear...

At this point any player that stayed within the dream must make a spot hidden roll. If they have a moderate success or better read the following highlighted text. If the player failed the roll skip this section and head to the section marked: Houlton, Maine.

You focus all your will and desperately try to understand the young woman's words. You are able to block out all of the other terrible images your mind is trying to perceive and you see her mouth the words 'Scroll' and 'Albert' As soon as she sees the recognition in your eyes her arms give out and you witness her chest heave as the invisible dagger is plunged into it. Her hands scratch and punch her invisible attacker but to

no avail. She is being stabbed again and again as you sit and watch this ghostly murder play out to your horror.

Any players that made it through the entire grisly scene must now make a sanity check with a minus 10% penalty. Any who fail will contract a minor phobia and must deal with this condition for the remainder of the game.

The rest of the train ride goes by without further incident and the team arrives in Houlton a bit later than originally planned. Upon their departure from the train the time is about nine o'clock in the morning. Once they are able to collect their bags and make their way to the center of town it will be closer to ten a.m. From the station they are able to hire a local car to drive them the remainder of the way to Houlton.

Getting to Houlton By Bus

The bus from New York heads through Hartford and then onto Boston before the players have to catch a connecting bus to Houlton. A bus ride of this length during this time was not an easy way of travel. Remind the players that there is no tech devices to occupy their time and attention. If a trip is scheduled to take thirteen hours that is an optimistic guess and all of those hours are spent sitting in a non-air-conditioned rolling metal shell with hard seats and thirty-five other suffering strangers. Because bus travel is the cheapest way to move between cities families with children tend to use them as well. A screaming baby, an antsy toddler and a sick little one could make a normally grueling trip one that seems like a path to hell. You decide how far to push the discomfort for the players. If professionals, they probably tolerate the inconveniences a bit more (unless their sense of entitlement starts to get the better of them). The criminals will probably be the more upset group so feel free to get a reaction out of them.

Also, since there are no amenities on a bus stops are planned every few hours for bathroom breaks and meals. After the bus switch in Boston the players will only have to endure another six hours of travel and two more stops. At some point during the drive have one of the players meet Gladys Duran, a ghost. Gladys is the Grandmother of Patricia Reese and sixteen years ago she boarded a bus, bound for the Droyden House and demanded that Albert tell her what happened to Patricia in Mexico. Unfortunately, Albert snapped and killed Mrs. Duran. He knew that eventually someone would go looking for her, so he chopped her up and fed her to his hounds. The police asked some questions but Bryin said that she stopped by and then left. No charges were ever filed, and Mrs. Duran is still labeled as a missing person in Houlton.

The bus begins to refill again now that the driver has announced that everyone has five minutes until he leaves. You take your seat by the window in the same row you have been in since leaving Boston with a full belly and a copy of a local newspaper just so you can have something to read during the last couple of hours.

An old woman with neatly cropped white hair sits down beside you and places her handbag in her lap before looking up at you smiling.

“Morning.” She says, her voice clear and pleasant, “Going all the way to Houlton or are you getting off in Bangor?”

You clear your throat and reply, “All the way to Houlton? You?”

“Oh yes, I have some unfinished business there.” She says and begins removing her white gloves, neatly folding them and placing them in her purse.

The lady will make light small talk for the next two hours to Bath and then get off the bus for a lavatory break and not come back. In fact, if the player that sat with Mrs. Duran discusses this encounter with the other investigators, they are told that the seat next to them was empty and no one sat there through that part of the journey. The group will even go on to tell that investigator that they slept almost the entire time. However, the mysterious lady will give some information regarding her ‘unfinished’ business if the player she sat next to simply says, “what kind of business” or something along those lines. Should that occur read the following:

“Well, I have an appointment with a gentleman who was a, oh what’s that word, an archeologist, a Mr. Bryin. He owes me an explanation as to what actually happened to my granddaughter Patty Reese.”

If the player tries to interrupt her, she merely goes on like they had not spoken:

“You see about twenty years ago he led a group of nice people into Mexico looking for artifacts from some tribe or another. Now that’s a bit of folly right there if you ask me, to bring a young woman into that godforsaken place, was just not right. Well, maybe you know and maybe you don’t, but they found things that they of course shouldn’t have. Old things. Dark things. And then luck took a turn like it always does and people started getting sick and dyin’ off. So, this Bryin takes what’s left of his people north to a village where they hadn’t seen a white man in probably forever. Well, there he tries to get things settled down, but arguments start up. Patty was getting scared, the poor thing. She wanted to come home and one night she just broke down and begged him to finally accept they were beaten.”

“Well, you know men, once they get an idea in their head there’s no reasoning with them. He got angry, called her terrible names and before she knew it he had hit her. Well, she screamed and that only brought the devil out of him. He tore her blouse open and began beating and punching and biting her. Imagine my poor girl being bitten all over her neck and face and such. It’s not right. She was fighting as best she could, but he was not going to be stopped. He took a machete that was lying near his back pack and set about carving Patty up. Each swing took a bit more of her away and added tenfold to her suffering. I’m not sure why the smell of blood drives men wild. Must be a leftover instinct from the old days when killin’ was all men were good at.”

“Well, for whatever reason, she held on to life far too long. She felt every swing and cut. By the time he was done it was hard to even tell it was a female he had raged on, let alone that it was my Patty. So, I am heading to the house. I’m gonna ring that doorbell, stand there until he opens it, and then ask him point blank, “Mr. Albert Bryin why did you have to go off and butcher my granddaughter. And he better have some answers for me or else I am going to give him a serious piece of my mind. Oh, look it’s Bangor.” She laughs. “I better go to the ladies’ room; I’ve been talking so much that time just flew by.” She stands and exits the bus leaving you completely befuddled.

Houlton, Maine

The players have arrived in Houlton and immediately feel like they have stepped into another world. The town hosts a population just over seven thousand people. Most of them are loggers, mill workers or fur traders; the kind of people who travel this far north to live are the kinds of people who prefer to be left alone. As outsiders, the player will be treated with, at best, suspicion and a dismissive attitude. Most people will not be openly hostile unless pressed for information or threatened directly. There are two main sources of information in Houlton for the investigators, Maxine’s Diner and Houlton General Hospital.

Arriving in Houlton, you immediately feel like you’ve stepped back in time at least sixty years. The main street of Houlton is hard packed earth and not paved. In the area around the bus stop there are only a few shops. There is a general store, a hardware shop, shoe store, small post office, a barber and beauty salon, a bank and of course Maxine’s Diner.

Even as far south as Bath you had heard of the amazing meals one can get at Maxine’s Diner. It is no surprise that there are people

milling about the storefront and, as you can see through the large plate glass window, lining many of the counter stools drinking coffee and finishing off their meals.

The Sheriff's office is around the corner as is the Houlton Arms Hotel. The only other place of any bustle or interest is the small hospital that sits on a small hill about a mile from the center of town.

With the exception of Maxine's and the Hospital all of the players' inquiries are met with short or one-word answers. The townsfolk will say things like "not my concern" or "can't say I know him" or "Don't poke a bear, leave things be."

At Maxine's, the mood is a bit lighter and if the players arrive near closing time at seven p.m. (when most of the locals have gone) Maxine herself might even be willing to talk about the rumors running around town. Depending on their skill check (either Persuasion or Charisma) allow the players to hear some of the following rumors...

For a Moderate Success...

- The Droyden House was never actually left to the crazy Bryin fella. He stole the title to that land from old man Droyden just before he died.
- They say the all the staff quit and went back to Boston.
- The grandniece, Tabitha, is very odd and has been sent away to a special school for girls.
- Bryin's nephew Jonathan got his wife, Melinda, pregnant while at University and they were forced to marry to cover up the incident.

For a Hard Success...

- Albert Bryin was haunted by terrible dreams almost every night since his return from Mexico.
- He was married but his wife left him for the chauffeur while he was away on the infamous dig.
- The bulk of the family's estate is now in arrears to the bank and they will be foreclosing soon if something isn't done.
- Tabitha was sent away to school for an incident involving a stray dog. She had cut it up.

For an Extreme Success...

- Jonathan was studying law at Harvard when his wife became pregnant.
- The servants have left the estate but none of them have been seen around town even to catch a bus.

- An old lady went missing up at the house some fifteen years ago. She was never seen again.
- Melinda, according to several past employees of the estate has been seen wandering the grounds late at night, dressed in nothing but a night gown and seems to be looking for something.

As for the rest of the town, local authorities were not called to the Droyden House at any point, nor have they had any contact with the family for some time. As a result, there will be no additional information the players will be able to gather from the local police beyond what has been available already. The only other information the players can get is if they visit the hospital's morgue.

Houlton General Hospital

Standing on a hill just about a mile from the center of town sits Houlton General Hospital. It takes up a large portion of the horizon to the southeast and as the sun begins to set the building becomes even more intrusive to the overall landscape.

You make your way towards the gothic building and get a sense that it has seen its share of tragedy, misery and pain. As you approach, the gravel road splits into several directions. A sign at the fork in the road reads: Emergency, Admissions/Patient Rooms, Morgue and Psychiatric Ward. Each noted with an arrow pointing in the appropriate direction.

The path around the back of the hospital begins to slope downhill following the natural ley of the land. You pass a small parking lot where two ambulances are parked. As you keep walking you are suddenly met with a small parking lot lit by an exterior light. Moths and other insects are beginning to assault the fixture desperately trying to snuff out the confusing glow. A large set of double doors are closed and locked. A button marked 'Press for Pick-up' is mounted to the stone wall under the light.

If the players ring the bell an orderly will appear acting somewhat confused, he had no prior notice that anyone was coming to retrieve a body. He is courteous but skeptical and guarded. Money will make him a bit more forthcoming and if the players offer him \$10.00 or more, he will speak with them about whatever it is they wish to know. As the keeper you can offer them the following information if the conversation feels appropriate:

The orderly tells them that Albert Bryin's body was logged into the morgue but was only there for a short time. According to his understanding, the family arranged to have his body taken by a private ambulance service directly to Boston. He

goes on to say that this is somewhat uncommon but then again, so are the Bryin's. He also tells you that Fredrick Tosh, the funeral director, has been going about town saying some terrible things about the whole situation. How Albert had promised him a very elaborate and profitable viewing and burial. He blames Jonathan for being tight-fisted and has even suggested that he believes the young couple are deliberately ignoring the old man's wishes and doing what they want, not what he wished them to do.

If the players decide to go around to the funeral home and ask Tosh his feelings about the situation, he will deny ever saying anything of the sort. He will try to sell the players a coffin or other services but will keep avoiding the subject until he finally tells them it would be inappropriate to speak about a family that is still dealing with their bereavement. If a player makes a Psychology roll successfully, they will realize he is definitely miffed but trying to be professional.

The Houlton Arms Hotel

At some point the players will want to make arrangements to have a base of operations until they can hire themselves a car out to the Droyden House; because this is the only active hotel in Houlton, they have little choice but to check into this establishment. The night clerk is a tall, almost emaciated looking man named Jerith Boggs. He is a bit slow and not educated beyond the fifth-grade level, but he can get the bags to the guests' rooms and set up rooms and keys for the players. He is the son of the owner, Wilamena Boggs.

As you round the corner onto Ash Street you see the Houlton Arms. It is a large building that has seen better days. Walking closer you see the corner stone dated 1846 and marvel at the nearly hundred-year-old edifice. The entryway is painted with a red door that has faded over time. The windows were once hand painted with gaudy and robust slogans. Slogans that no longer have meaning to folks living in New York a century later. Besides yourselves there are no other people on this street and all the other store fronts seem either empty or closed for the day's business. Climbing up the six marble steps that lead to the entrance, you take firm hold of the door and swing it towards you.

Once inside you are met with a dark room barely lit enough for you to make your way to the front desk some twenty feet ahead of you. Off to your immediate right is a sitting room that seems unoccupied but, with the style and setting of the furniture, it is difficult to clearly see if anyone is resting in front of the fireplace. To the left is the dining area. At the moment all the tables are set with linens and silverware, but no one seems to be eating and there is no one

clearing any plates from possible previous guests.

An emaciated and haggard looking man of substantial height rises from his chair. He shambles to the front desk and greets you as you approach.

"H-h-hhello. Y-y-you need rooooooms?" His watery eyes pass over each of you and seem to linger a bit longer on any woman who is present. "I-I-I have rooooooms. No g-g-guests to tonight. J-j-just me and the c-c-cat." He bursts out laughing, his thin chest heaving under his shirt and overalls. You can tell by his expression he thinks that was the funniest thing ever uttered. His mirth fades quickly though when he sees he is laughing alone.

Jerith will give the players the number of keys they ask for and take a payment of three dollars per room from the party. He struggles for a moment with the math but finally makes the change and counts it back to them with painstaking slowness. Jerith will then show the players to their rooms. He will carry the bags and thank them if they offer him a tip. Jerith is the son of the owner who the players may or may not meet depending on their schedule. He is the product of a very dysfunctional family with a history of abuse. His father died in prison after hospitalizing Jerith when he was nine while trying to defend his mother. If any male argues or threatens a female in front of him or if he feels the woman is being threatened, he will pay the offending male a visit in the night and will try to "punish" them. (See Appendices for NPC stats)

The Droyden House...

Once the players make arrangements with a local who can be hired to drive people outside of the town limits, the players can make their way to the Droyden House, home of Albert Bryin. The trip begins around 3 p.m. and will take just over an hour due to the narrow, unpaved roads that head north for approximately thirty miles to the estate.

The Droyden House was originally built by Jeremiah Droyden back in the mid-1800's and sits on a two-hundred-and-fifty-acre parcel of land, most of which is virgin woods. In fact, only about fifteen acres have in fact been cleared and are still in use near the main house.

As you pass through the main gate the wrought iron adornments draw your attention, frightening and misshapen mythical creatures made of twisting metal appear poised and ready to attack each other. The driveway continues for nearly a quarter mile through groves of pine and other hearty species of local trees. The car suddenly emerges from the canopy and before you lies a grand villa. A fountain and an odd statue of some amphibious merfolk grace the

patch of lawn inside the large sweeping circular driveway. Freshly dug gardens of flowers can be glimpsed off the left side of the manor house extending far into the backyard.

The front door is large and studded with iron. One either side of the entryway are wall sconces which were originally designed to use actual torches for casting light upon the vestibule.

Your team is dropped off right outside the entryway and once your luggage is unloaded the driver says, "I'll be back by ten tomorrow morning, like we agreed." Jumping back into his vehicle he pulls away, tires spitting gravel and dust as it drives rapidly away.

The front door opens and standing before you is a rather large man in his early thirties. His hair is combed to the side and he is wearing a nice suit and a red Windsor tie. His shoes are impeccably polished and look Italian.

"Welcome to the Droyden House. I am Jonathan Bryin, won't you please come in?" He motions for you all to enter and smiles as you step inside the grand foyer.

Closing the door behind you he continues, "so I received the telegram yesterday that you would be arriving. It seems your Boss is very eager to get his hands on our relics. I hope you understand that while I want to be fair about this, these items mean a lot to my family. It was the life's work of my uncle and I am loathed to part with them."

**** Major Plot Note to the Keeper...**

Regardless of the opening the players chose Jonathan will dodge any direct conversation about the amount of money to be offered or any threats that might be made. He promises the players that they can see the items after dinner. Even if he is physically threatened, he will not budge on this matter knowing that his daughter's life depends on playing this role exactly as Albert has laid out.

Should the scene get physical this early try to talk the players down and tell them this is normal behavior for the country gentile. If that doesn't work have Melinda walk in with a shotgun and tell the players she will shoot or kill them if they don't behave. If this action was necessary, the players will need to relinquish their guns to Jonathan. He will collect them and lock them away in a gun cabinet for which he claims only he has the key. In truth, the gun cabinet is locked, and Albert has the key. Jonathan only plays like he does for Tabitha's sake.

Jonathan then offers to take the players to their selected rooms. If a particular player has been the source of the violence or has been less than congenial Jonathan will be sure to place them in Bedroom # 1. This has a false panel in the wall, and they will be the first victim to potentially fall prey to Albert's murderous

scheme. Read the following as the team is shown to its rooms:

"Dinner is at six sharp so why don't I let you get settled in. I am sure you will wish to freshen up. There is a bathroom just down this hall and another around the corner at your disposal. Since we will be discussing my Uncle's artifacts after our meal, I ask that you please dress. I will have everything ready for your inspection then. I am confident that we will be able to come to some arrangement that is mutually beneficial to us all."

Jonathan turns and begins to walk away when he suddenly stops and matter of factly says, "Oh, and please do not go outside after five p.m. Our kennel master has been instructed to release our hounds and I would hate to see anyone injured. Bear problems, you see? If any of you smoke, I ask that you do so now. Melinda and I are very sensitive to its odor. If later this evening you must indulge, I ask you to do so in the kitchen near the cooking hearth."

He departs, smiling. The time, is now 4:30 p.m.

This announcement is likely going to make the players nervous and suspicious. Good. Throughout this evening as the Keeper you want the players to begin to feel like they are losing control of the situation. At each step through dinner and the presentation of the relics the players must start to feel like they are trapped and begin to suspect that something is terribly amiss. Should the players try to get outside now they will only have half an hour to navigate the grounds. See if you can dissuade them but if not, read the following.

You sneak out into the yard through a side door near the stairs that lead up to your rooms. The sky continues to look bleaker throughout the day. You guess that rain and plenty of it, will be coming down very soon. As you begin your sojourn you see a garage where two cars are kept; one vehicle appears in good shape and the other is some older make and model that you're not sure would even start. Off to the right of the garage are the kennels where the sound of many dogs howling and baying can be heard. You walk a bit closer but the sound of the beasts starting to growl and bark as they jump against the chain fence halts your step.

Turning west, you see a large in-ground pool, which is already covered for the season. The pool house and changing rooms are located immediately next door; upon examining them, you find that they locked. Further back is a small guest house which seems to be falling into disrepair.

At this point do not let the player approach the guest house. Remind them about the dogs and

that they are due back at the house. If they press on, they will be set upon by hounds and most likely die, even if they are armed with a gun. (See Appendices for stats on the Hounds) there are twenty-three of them. The player/s will lose.

Dinner: 6 p.m.

You come downstairs just before six o'clock and, after a little searching, find the dining room. It begins to dawn on you that you have not seen any servants currently working on the Estate. Jonathan is standing near the table with his wife, Melinda. The table has already been completely laid out for dinner. Melinda is a pretty blonde who appears to be in her early thirties; she smiles and shakes everyone's hand after her husband introduces her to the group.

The walls are adorned with numerous oil paintings from local artists. There are also a few portraits hanging including several members of the Droyden family and a portrait of Albert Bryin just prior to leaving for the dig in 1919. He is dressed in a fine fitting suit, a gray ascot tie with a small tie pin. He is leaning on the corner of a desk and appears to be smoking a pipe. In the windows are covered in snow and there is a fire glowing in the fireplace in the lower left-hand corner of the painting.

With pleasantries out of the way, you all take your seats and begin serving yourselves dinner as Jonathan takes the drink orders. Outside, you hear the distant peel of thunder and the howling of dogs who sound like they are on the trail of some animal on the grounds. Rain can be heard tapping at the windows as everyone settles down to eat and the small talk begins. At first it sounds like someone drumming their nails on a desktop, but within a few minutes its concussion sounds far more ominous. Eventually the conversation turns towards business and with a glance at his wife Jonathan takes a pause before answering some of your inquiries.

At this point you have enough information to field most of the questions regarding Albert Bryin's dig in Mexico and his recent 'demise'. During small talk you can also fill in any missing pieces of information the players may not have by using the background at the beginning of this module. I have included a list of other pieces of information that you can use or choose to pass over.

- Albert Bryin was born to blue collar parents and grew up in Boston.
- He never married.
- There was a rumor he was intimately involved with Patricia Reese but that was never confirmed.
- His doctorate is from Yale.

- All the servants have been let go recently due to financial troubles. (This is a lie. Bryin has killed them over the last few weeks in an attempt to reach the proper amount of blood that must flow for the dark ritual. Jonathan and Melinda know of these heinous crimes but the locals have no idea.
- Albert Bryin was born a twin but his sibling died within a few days of birth. His mother never fully recovered from the shock.

At this point, the investigators are nearing the time when the attacks will begin in earnest and will soon be in a life and death struggle with the very madman they believe is dead.

The Study: 8 p.m.

As you all enter the library you are impressed by the selection of books that line the walls on every side. There is a single window in the south wall and from it you can see lightning carving the night sky like a butcher might prepare a fatted calf.

"Melinda, dear, would you be so kind as to fetch the box from the other room?"

Melinda nods and excuses herself for a moment. While she is gone Jonathan pours a few glasses of brandy and passes them out to whomever wishes a small nightcap.

Melinda re-enters with the box and places it on a coffee table that sits between a large leather sofa and several matching armchairs. Jonathan takes a key from his pocket, then checks the time on an anniversary clock that adorns the mantle over the large fireplace and inserts it into the lock to open the chest.

The contents are exactly as they have been described to you by your employer:

- 1) A small pendant with a slanted star carved inside a circle. The pendant appears to be made from jade.
- 2) A small statue of some kind of humanoid-looking god. Even though the carving is old and rudimentary the body, while human, does not make up for the terrible elephant-like appendages hanging from its face.
- 3) A drum made from very old wood and covered in a thin membrane. If the players inspect it carefully (**Spot hidden roll -10%**) there are the remnants of a central spoke that may have at one time connected two such drums together.
- 4) A ring set with opals and fire rubies. The band is made of neither gold or silver. There is some small text inscribed inside the band, but the language is long dead.

- 5) The scroll is made of human skin taken from the face of Patricia Reese. This becomes very apparent if it is unwound because the eye slits and nostrils were not stitched closed. There are arcane symbols scratched and drawn on the scroll. If anyone attempts to study them they will need to take a Sanity check. Success means the player loses d3 Sanity and a failure means the player takes a d6 of sanity damage, drops the scroll and faints as a vision takes hold in their mind

READ ONLY IF AN INVESTIGATOR EXAMINES THE SCROLL...

Men and woman with misshapen features and big puffy eyes fill your mind. You see them coming out of a cave to gather along the water's edge. These inhumans struggle to breathe through thick gills in their neck. Each laborious inhale sounds like the sick wet slapping of fresh meat on the floor. Though they labor as they breathe, their squat forms are still strong enough to drag humans forward to be placed upon a wet rock at the edge of the oasis and sacrifice them. Human entrails and organs are dropped into the still waters as these monstrous man-things sing a gurgling song of devotion and obedience to their deep lord.

Any player who was caught in this vision is out of action for at least four hours and must be given that time to rest and recover. If they are taken upstairs and left in bedroom they will be attacked while weakened and somewhat delirious. **See 10 pm.**

The following text is for the players NOT examining the scroll or experiencing the vision:

Jonathan steps over to the window and looks out over the eastern side of the estate. Melinda appears a bit nervous her eyes darting back and forth from the relics to her husband. After a few moments, Jonathan speaks, "so there they are. As I am sure you can tell they are the genuine article. I know that you are all as anxious to have this transaction completed as we are. So, in the interest of fair play," he sits down behind the desk and takes another sip from his brandy. Placing the glass down he empties and ashtray in a small waste basket and says, "we will listen to whatever offer you have been instructed to make."

If the investigators, ask about the fact that there appears to have once been two drums Jonathan will deny it calmly and then become increasingly emphatic if pressed about it. If a player makes a Psychology roll and gets a success see the below chart to determine the outcome:

Skill check	The Player senses that Jonathan is highly stressed. It could be due to the sale of the items or even the death of his Uncle still weighing on him.
Mod:	
Hard	The Player knows that Jonathan is lying and that he is aware that there were once two drums connected together. His nervousness might be from the hope that the damaged drum won't ruin the sale.
Extreme	Jonathan is lying and is hiding something serious. His actions go beyond nervousness from the sale. His skin is flushed, his hands are shaking even though slightly. You know he is aware of much more than he is letting on.

If the investigators press about the drum Jonathan will tell them that the item was broken by his daughter Tabitha several years ago. Albert had left the drum out on his desk after another long bout of research and Tabitha came in and was playing with them. She dropped the drums by accident, cracking them apart and tearing the head of the other. Bryin was furious but the item was now ruined. He chased the young girl out of the library and Jonathan has no idea what happened to the other drum. If this answer is still not sufficient, Melinda will jump in and add her voice to the argument swearing on her daughter that it is true.

The players should be told at this point that the pieces are intact as far as their employers are concerned and any documentation or photos they have only show and indicate one drum. The next part is simply you, the keeper, trying to get as much as you can from the players before everyone turns in for the night. Remember, Jonathan has to make it look like he wants the money but in truth he just wants Tabitha back.

Once the negotiation is done read the following:

You shake hands with Jonathan and his wife. You are very happy with the deal you have

negotiated and are confident your boss will be as well.

You look at the clock on the mantle and are surprised to see that it is already after nine. The storm that has been raging these last few hours seems to have hit a small lull and only a light drizzle now pecks at the lead glass windows. Jonathan offers you another brandy to celebrate. As the artifacts are being placed back into their box for safe keeping you hear the sound of a low rhythmic thumping. Boom, Boom... Boom, Boom... Boom, Boom... the soft beat becomes immediately recognizable, it is the sound of the human heart.

Melinda turns ghostly white and spins to face Jonathan. Jonathan moves quickly to the window and throws the drapes to one side looking out into the dead blackness.

With a crash, a large pane of glass shatters somewhere nearby and howls and screams can be heard coming down the hallway towards you.

If the players have not removed the person who unsuccessfully attempted to examine the scroll to a safe room upstairs, that person will be the primary target of the dogs' attacks because they are in a weakened state and will be easier to kill. However, if the affected player is out of the room then the dogs will attack whom they were always meant to kill, Jonathan.

If the players are criminals and still have their weapons, they may be able to stop the attack. Roll Initiative and handle the combat. If their guns were confiscated, then Jonathan will die a terrible and grisly death by the five large hounds. Players may run or grab makeshift weapons to fight off the dogs, but Jonathan will die before the drumming stops and the dogs, no longer hearing the drum beat, will break off and leave the house.

Melinda can't stop screaming "Tabitha! Oh my God, Tabitha no!" Her eyes never leave the savaged corpse of her husband. Blood continues to flow across the floor from the massive wound in his neck. There are also bite marks on his hands, legs and face. You have seen some terrible things in your life, but this attack ranks up there with the grisliest of them.

The only way the players will get Melinda calmed down is with a sedative. She will need to sleep at least four hours before she will be of any help to the players. However, they don't have that much longer to uncover the mystery of the Droyden House. If the players take her to her room on the lower floor, they will find pictures of Tabitha displayed proudly. A letter sits on the vanity from the Arkham Preparatory School for Girls its contents speak of Tabitha needing to be brought back home for various unsettling infractions. The letter was dated, almost two weeks ago. (See Appendices for Hand out marked "The letter.")

If the players search Jonathan's body, they will find a pistol but no key to the gun cabinet. (That key is with Albert Bryin who snuck in to lock the guns away himself.)

10 p.m.

The rain has picked up again, and the time between the crashes of lightning seems to be dwindling. The house has been quiet since you calmed Melinda down and covered her husband over with a table cloth.

The back-patio door where the dogs burst through has been blocked with a couch from the sitting room. Everyone agrees that this barricade is merely for show, if anything or anyone wants to come in through that door the couch will not stop them.

If the players choose to search the house, they will find each room set according to your tastes and ideals as a Keeper. Remember Bryin was a recluse so his style is probably more to the masculine, cold and stogy. If any player is ever alone, Albert Bryin will take the chance to attack them from one of the many secret passages in the house. He will strike if the other players are more than 2 rooms away, on different floors or the single player is in a locked room upstairs.

11 p.m.

If any players are in their rooms, especially guest room number 1, they will be the first attacked by Albert Bryin. He will strike from a panel behind the wall with the sole purpose to butcher his victim. If this player was the one overcome by the vision from the scroll the death is instantaneous. If not, consider the first attack from Bryin to be a complete surprise and +4 damage. All other attacks follow the statistics for Albert Bryin, see appendices.

Without warning you hear a scream fill the house. Panic and terror engulf you, but you try desperately to suppress the urge to hide. A massive eruption of thunder crashes over the top of the manor as a flash of white-hot lightning illuminates your entire room.

Once the rumbling ceases and the light from the storm's strike stops, you realize you are standing in a completely dark house. The power has been knocked out. Then, as quickly as it began the screaming stops. And, for a time so does the beating of your heart...

Midnight

It is at this point that the players will have to start making hard decisions, such as whether they are willing to risk the dogs outside or deal with the maniac hunting them in the house. If they have the psychic with them or any player with an

occult score above 50% , the players may now choose to do a séance and attempt to contact the dead for answers.

The players may choose to try to contact Patricia Reese if so, they will need an extreme success. See Appendices; Patricia Reese.

Skill check	The occultist contacts a spirit but not the one they hoped for, (but they don't know that) Answers are only in simple taps, 1 for yes 2 for no and only 3 questions.
Mod:	
Hard	The occultist contacts a spirit but not the one they wanted and is aware of the fact. However, this spirit can write a single word to answer any three questions. If a player/s is already dead, they will be the spirit that is reached.
Extreme	The Occultist is possessed by the spirit they asked for. The ghost remains in them for 10 minutes and can answer in full sentences and even lead them around the house. Both personalities are present so they both can answer questions.

**** Major Plot Note to the Keeper...**

Albert Bryin is NOT DEAD and cannot be reached by a séance. There are plenty of other ghosts in the house since Bryin butchered six staff members over the last ten days and their remains are outside in the garden not to mention Jonathan and any players he already has killed. The ghosts cannot give the name of their killer because he is wearing an old purple hood with arcane symbols that that conceals his identity. They can say the killer is human. Instructions to the ghost will be in the back of this book. See Appendices: Ghost Séance. The only other subject the ghosts cannot talk about is Tabitha. She is being held in a circle of hatred and obfuscation in the old guest house by her deranged uncle who is using her as leverage against Jonathan and Melinda.

Special Rules for Albert Bryin

If Bryin fails to kill a player for more than two hours he will use the drum again to send the dogs in to cause chaos and confusion. If that does not work, he will lure Melinda away with promises of Tabitha's release. If Melinda is taken, he will begin torturing her, hoping the screams from the pool house will lure the team to split up.

Bryin is desperate to end this ritual by daybreak. He believes that with just one more body, just one more kill he can open the gates to eternal allowing the ancient beings he has heard whispering to him in his dreams to enter our world.

Ending the Game

So, here you are. The game is nearly over, or is it? As the Keeper your job is to make Albert Bryin's attacks and attempts to kill the players as effective as possible. But as the morning approaches, if he still has victims alive, he will become sloppy and try to rush. In his madness he thinks these killings will work to finally open the portal to R'yleah which was the whole reason to fake his own death which he did by murdering his butler and having the ambulance take the body to the morgue. Since he has been a recluse for more than fifteen years, no one could easily identify the body as NOT being Albert Bryin.

Keep trying to use distractions and whatever else comes to your twisted mind to separate the players but if by four in the morning they are not all dead, Bryin will become desperate and attack two or three at a time. Also, Melinda should be attacked if she is ever alone.

If the sun rises and Bryin has not been killed or killed all the investigators, he will kill himself with a shotgun blast under the chin.

In the end, the players will either kill Albert Bryin, he will commit suicide, or they will die trying to defend themselves. As the Keeper, make this an intense game of Cat & Mouse. Try to use Bryin's knowledge of the estate or even his grand niece's life to drag people away for him to pick off one by one. That being said, if the players can hold him off or kill him, let it happen! You are not here to simply kill the players; you are here to unfold this tragic tale. If Bryin can be stopped-- GREAT. Your game will be much better received if a few souls are able to walk out at sunrise but make them feel like they earned it.

This is important, no matter what the outcome of this night's bloodshed there NO portal waiting for Bryin. This is all his own madness. Bryin has been consumed by his own guilt with regards to killing Patricia Reese. He has taken these items and built an elaborate fantasy around them, but it

is all for nothing. He is merely a sad, delusional and homicidal old man.

Below are the three endings marked success, survival and failure. Read the appropriate one aloud to the players. And then with a flourish and the closure of a book... send them home out into the darkness...

Success

You have stopped him. Albert Bryin is dead. In his pocket you found his journal and upon reading through the notes discover that this night of horror and butchery had been his intention all along.

He has been willing to kill for this delusion of power and youth since the dig in Mexico when he attacked Patricia Reese after a night of lovemaking. Grief and guilt kept him away from these cursed relics for some time but in the end their pull upon his mind was simply too much.

In the morning, you find Tabitha bound and gagged in the kitchen of the guest house. She is shaken, dehydrated, malnourished and broken. She neither cries nor reacts to the events that have unfolded, she only stares off into space as if witnessing some distant scene unfold itself only for her.

The sheriff is called to the estate and after taking your statements and photographing the various items in your possession, he has one of his men drive you back to Houlton with the relics in hand.

You catch a bus back to Boston, but as you try to rest your dreams are twisted and surreal.

All except for one... you see an elderly woman sitting next to a younger lady. They are smiling and talking quietly amongst themselves. After a few minutes the older woman turns and meets your gaze, her eyes are gentle and calm. She says nothing. She just nods her head once and smiles, as the young woman blows you a kiss. You awaken moments later and wonder if you'll ever properly sleep again, no, you actually wonder, if you would ever really want too...

Survival

You were able to survive the slaughter. With the coming light of dawn Albert Bryin knew he had been bested and that his Gods would tolerate no failure, so he gave himself to them praying for their mercy.

In his pocket you find his journal and, upon reading through the pages of notes, discover that this night of horror and butchery had been his intention all along.

He has been willing to kill for this delusion of power and youth since Mexico when he murdered Patricia Reese after a night of lovemaking. Grief and guilt kept him away from these cursed relics for some time but in the end their pull upon his mind was simply too much.

In the morning you find Tabitha bound and gagged in the kitchen of the Guest House. She is shaken, dehydrated, malnourished and broken. She neither cries nor reacts to the events that have unfolded, she only stares off into space as if witnessing some distant scene of horror.

The sheriff is called to the estate and after taking your statements and the relics as evidence he tells his deputy to give you a ride to the bus stop in Houlton.

You catch a bus back to Boston empty handed and wondering just what will happen when you arrive with nothing to show your employer.

You try to rest but your dreams are twisted and surreal. You doubt if you will ever be right again, but you are certain of one thing. That you will never offer to investigate or consult on a case that deals with the supernatural again.

Failure

You have failed. You and your team have succumbed to the sick and blood-soaked plan of Albert Bryin. Your mortal lives as you knew them are over.

As a shade you are given time to witness the result of this madness. You watch as the sun comes up on a confused and bewildered Albert Bryin. You can feel his frustration and confusion.

There is no glory.

No portal.

No Gods to whisk him away to paradise.

There is only a blood-soaked house and a pile of corpses. He walks to the gun cabinet and removes the key from around his neck. He then opens it and removes a shotgun.

Weeping, he sits on a chair and places the butt of the weapon against the ground. Slowly, he lowers his chin onto the barrel, tears of failure drenching his face.

Then, you sense a living soul out on the estate grounds. A young soul, alive but still strong. You try to reach Bryin to tell him, to stop him from killing himself. You send images to him of redemption and of salvation, but he cannot hear them.

With a scream he pushes down on the trigger and the meat that was his skull splatters everywhere.

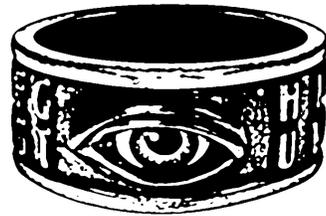
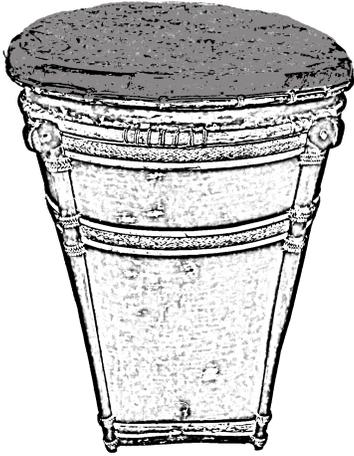
Days have come and gone, and Tabitha is almost ready to join you. she has fought so hard, but her heart is giving out. She does not cry, the crying stopped days ago. Now she only stares at you and very occasionally blinks to let you know she still can hear you singing softly to her.

When her end finally comes it is not peaceful. She wretches and her body convulses. She does not leave this earthly domain without a final struggle. When the police finally come almost a month later, her body is bloated and already decaying.

You haunt these grounds for a while before you decide to leave. And when you do there is no great light waiting for you merely darkness. A darkness so deep and so silent that you actually feel scared to proceed but what else is left for you... you cross over and for the first time in many years, the house breathes a sigh of relief.

Fin....

Appendices...



2) NPC'S

Vance Morris

Age 46 Curator of the Museum of Natural History.

STR 40 CON 55 SIZ 60 DEX 45 INT 75

APP 65 POW 48 EDU 84 SAN 60 HP 10

DB Nil Build 1 Move 6

Appraise 70%, Charm 25%, Credit Rating 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 40%, History 65%, Law 30%, Occult 60%, Persuade 55%, Science 28%, Spot Hidden 30%

Joseph Genevese

Age 25 Favorite nephew of the Genevese Crime Boss.

STR 60 CON 50 SIZ 60 DEX 48 INT 68

APP 71 POW 55 EDU 72 SAN 61 HP 10

DB Nil Build 1 Move 6

Accounting 65%, Appraise 45%, Charm 53%, Credit Rating 70%, Dodge 24%, Firearms (pistol) 60% (shotgun) 50%, Intimidate 60%, Listen 25%, Occult 30%, Stealth 42%

Jereth Boggs

Age unknown. Night clerk at the Houlton Arms

STR 40 CON 55 SIZ 60 DEX 45 INT 75

APP 65 POW 48 EDU 84 SAN 60 HP 10

DB Nil Build 1 Move 6

Accounting 35%, Brawl 60%, Listen 50%, Locksmith 42%, Spot Hidden 40%, Stealth 40%, Swim 65%, Throw 60%, Track 55%

Jonathan Bryin

Age 33. Nephew of Albert Bryin

STR 55 CON 64 SIZ 71 DEX 42 INT 60

APP 64 POW 42 EDU 60 SAN 38 HP 12

DB Nil Build 1 Move 7

Credit Rating 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 45%, Drive 55%, Firearms (pistol) 55%, Law 48%, Occult 20%, Persuade 75%, Sleight of Hand 44% Spot Hidden 60%, Survival 40%

Melinda Bryin

Age 32. Wife to Jonathan and Mother to Tabitha

STR 40 CON 48 SIZ 50 DEX 56 INT 65

APP 70 POW 42 EDU 65 SAN 55 HP 9

DB Nil Build 1 Move 5

Accounting 70%, Acting 45%, Firearms (shotgun) 45%, Language (French) 70%, Library Use 65%, Listen 38%, Persuade 40%, Ride 60%, Stealth 45%.

Albert Bryin

Age 56. Owner of Droyden House

STR 64 CON 60 SIZ 68 DEX 62 INT 75

APP 45 POW 22 EDU 73 SAN 20 HP 13

DB +2 Build 1 Move 7

Archeology 72%, Climb 45%, Cthulhu Mythos 60%, Brawl (machete) 65%, History 40%, Jump 45%, Library Use 45%, Occult 36%, Spot Hidden 75%, Survival 55%, Track 45%.

Dog (x10)

Age 3+ Trained to hunt and kill

STR 50 CON 55 SIZ 40 DEX 65 INT 60

APP -- POW 40 EDU -- SAN 38 HP 9

DB Nil Build 0 Move 12

ATTACKS 1

Fighting 65% Damage 1d6+2

Spot interesting 70%
Track 73%

3) The Letter

Dear Mrs. Bryin:

I write to you with a heavy heart but a clear conscience. As you know, we have already had several meetings regarding Tabitha and her behavior during previous terms. She has always been a challenging student, requiring extra attention and occasionally additional discipline--which you and your husband authorized us to use if absolutely needed.

I fear we have gone beyond simple discipline in this case. Tabitha has begun terrorizing a younger girl. She seems fixated on this one child and has gone to great lengths to make certain this girl is aware of her presence at all times. Whenever we question Tabitha about her fixation, she merely becomes withdrawn and refuses to speak. At first, we thought she might, (and I know this can be shocking to read but it does occasionally happen at schools that educates a single gender) be enamored with the girl or perhaps merely jealous of this child's standing at the academy. The child in question is the daughter of a prominent Senator from Massachusetts so you can see why we needed to deal with this matter immediately.

Well, the term is a month in, and things are only escalating. Tabitha is convinced she must be near this girl at all times and has even used words like, "hunting, stalking and tracking." Tabitha has become so obsessed that she attacked the young girl in her dorm screaming that she needed to, "see her soul to be certain she was worthy."

Mrs. Bryin, I must insist that you come and collect Tabitha immediately. I have been trying to reach you for several days, but to no avail. This is my last hope. If you do not collect your child in the next five days I will turn her over to social services and let them attempt to track you down. I am dreadfully sorry that it has had to come to this, but I can see no way that Tabitha could possibly stay here and not have this turn from a bizarre incident into potentially national news.

Signed,

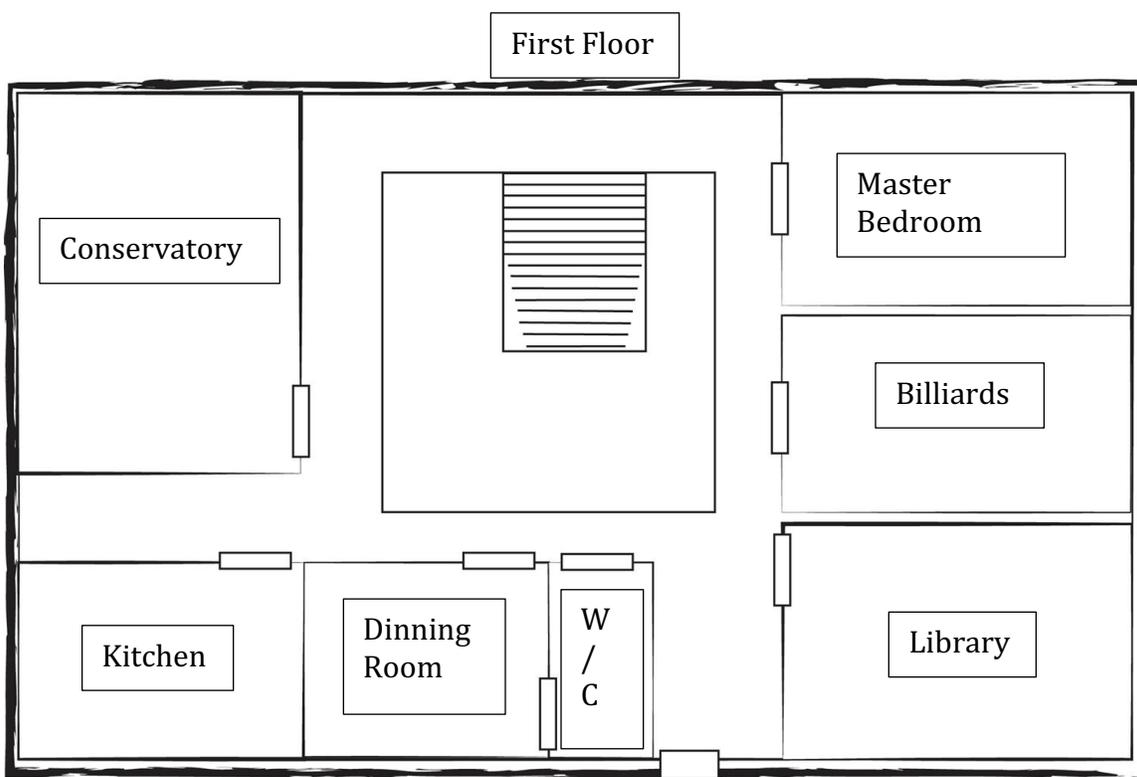
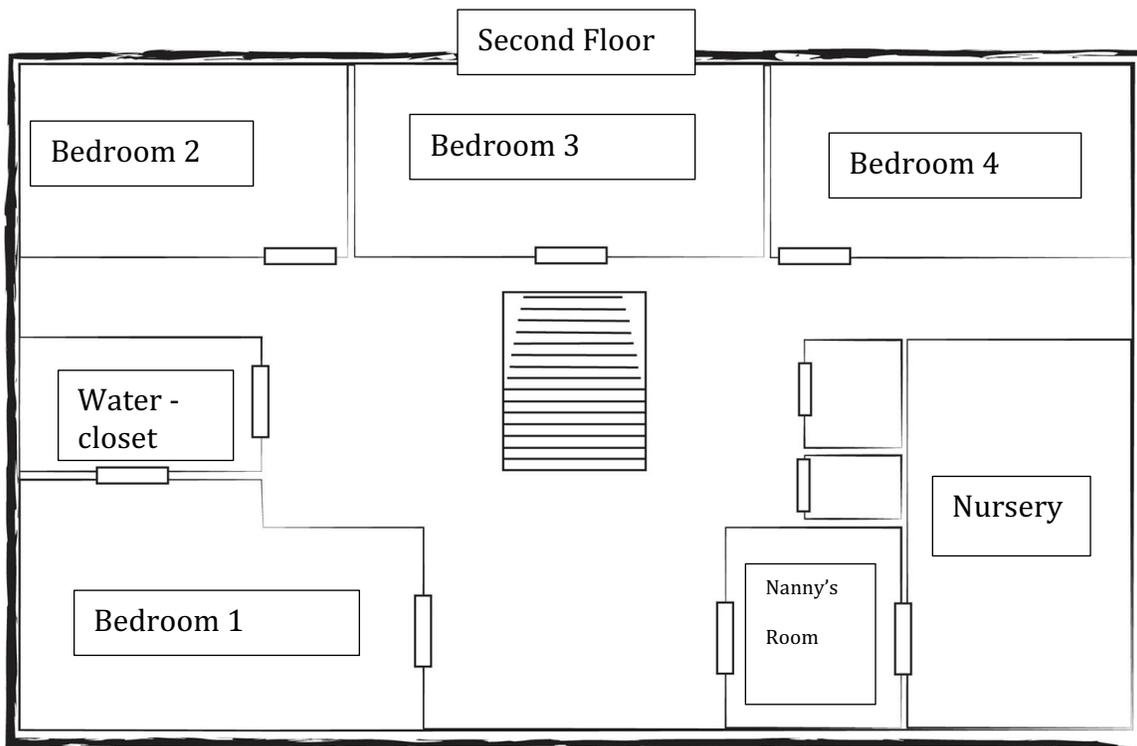
*Agnes Billsby
Head Mistress
Arkham Academy for Girls*

4) Patricia Reese-Ghost

If the players attempt to summon Patricia Reese she will only appear on an Extreme success. She has also been dead for quite a long time and will seem foggy as to some of her memories. She will recall the dig and the fighting, and she will recall Professor Masker's. As to her own demise she will remember the intimacy of the sex and then later the ferocity of the killing. She will fight to not admit it was her own lover who ended her life but if the players press and persuade, she will eventually reveal that Albert Bryin was her killer.

GHOST HAND OUT-Post Séance

- 1) You cannot name your killer. You didn't see him because of a purple hood he wore over his head that was covered in arcane sigils. It makes you unable to say anything regarding his identify.
- 2) You know Tabitha is tied up in the guest house but cannot lead the investigators there since she is within some circle of suppression.
- 3) You can lead them to use the drum to confuse the dogs or lure the dogs away from an escape attempt. If both drums are beating the animals will whine and howl unless they see someone attempt to leave the estate, then they will give chase.
- 4) You can tell the players about a shotgun in the master bedroom closet. This will help them fight off an attack,
- 5) Other than that, you can lead them anyway you can by use of the conditions of the success roll of the séance.



The Droyden House